

Rapid City Landscaping Committee

December 10, 2001

Rapid City Planning Commission
c/o Rapid City Planning Department
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Dear Planning Committee Members:

Recently, the Rapid City Planning Commission and the Rapid City Council approved the appointment of a Landscaping Committee as a subcommittee of the Planning Commission. The appointment of the subcommittee did not include any specific charge as to the purpose for which the subcommittee was established. The subcommittee has met on approximately four occasions. I was selected as chairman of the subcommittee. Eirik Heikes of Wyss Associates was appointed as co-chairman.

As I indicated, the subcommittee has already begun to review the landscaping requirements for commercial and industrial properties. We have extensively discussed the existing ordinance, its weaknesses and its strengths. We have identified a number of deficiencies which we plan to address with a draft amended ordinance. However, prior to beginning the process of amending the existing ordinance, we thought it best to bring you up-to-date regarding the key deficiencies/issues which we believe need to be amended and/or addressed.

First, it should again be noted that we believe an amended ordinance should apply only to **new** commercial and industrial development. Existing commercial and industrial development will be grandfathered although we expect to work on a triggering mechanism wherein an upgrade to an existing commercial or industrial property will trigger some additional landscaping requirements.

The key deficiencies/issues we have identified include (1) the need for automatic irrigation systems; (2) additional landscaping in parking lots; (3) increasing the size of plant material; (4) credentials for landscape designers; (5) requiring the planting of trees along streets; and (6) promotion of personal safety through good landscape design. There are other issues and/or deficiencies which will also be addressed.

We would like to make it very clear that it is not our intention to propose an amended ordinance which would be revolutionary. We have examined a number of ordinances from other communities in the general geographic area of Rapid City. For example, the ordinances in Ft. Collins, Colorado and Bozeman, Montana have been looked at. We have also compared our existing ordinance to ordinances in several

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other communities including Sioux Falls, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Casper, Wyoming; Billings, Montana and Greeley, Colorado. It is our intention to bring our ordinance up-to-par with requirements which more closely match requirements of some of these communities. We have noted that Rapid City is attracting a number of national chain type businesses. These national chains are complying with landscape requirements which are much more comprehensive than those which exist in Rapid City. Thus, we have concluded that our existing ordinance could be updated to provide for a more aesthetically pleasing environment without the risk of deterring these national chains from coming to Rapid City. Thus, our goal is to improve upon the landscape ordinance we have by focusing upon the deficiencies we have noted and to make an amended ordinance function for the benefit of Rapid City.

Shortly, we will start the work of amending the ordinance. We hope to provide a draft to the Planning Commission in the first quarter of 2002. We are hoping that the Planning Commission will approve the amended ordinance and that it will then forward it on to the City Council for final approval. We are hoping that the City Council will be in agreement with the changes we will propose.

We thought it best to alert you as to the plans of our subcommittee before we begin this time consuming task of amending the ordinance. We assume that if we have misconstrued our charge from your commission that you will notify us. In the meantime, we welcome your comments and/or suggestions.

Very truly yours,



Craig D. Grotenhouse, Chairman
Landscaping Committee

CDG/arh

Cc: Honorable Jerry Munson
Subcommittee Members